

Day 3 – Feb. 1, 2023

“The Battle of Jericho” has become ubiquitous in our culture, even today in a relatively biblically-illiterate society. If not from the gospel song, then just from references, most know the basics of the story of the fall of Jericho. From the command to walk around the city to the miraculous fall of the walls, this is not usually a story we need to tell in order to reference it.

But this story is very disturbing when taken seriously. Joshua meets The Commander of the Armies of the Lord, a figure met in the wilderness as they approach the impossible task of taking the most fortified city in the land with a group of foot-soldiers. And how does this Man of God describe himself? “We are God’s chosen people, whom He saved from Egypt. Are you, Commander of God’s Armies, friend for foe?” The answer must give you and I pause as it did Joshua: “Neither.” God’s armies are not for us, nor are they against us.

In a society that classifies every person, fairly and unfairly, as “on my side” or “on the other side”, this answer should make us think. God Himself doesn’t set his armies as friend, even of His own people, nor as foe, even against our enemies. Why? Because God is not on our side, nor is He against our side, because “our sides” are irrelevant. God is on God’s side, as are we, but the sides are God’s, not ours. We don’t get to choose who is good and bad, who God is for or against. God determines right and wrong, and we follow, not the other way around.

How many times have we heard people claim or at least imply that they have God on their side, or that God is against their enemies? From the picket signs at funerals proclaiming, “God hates gays” to politicians proclaiming their stance with God’s people, be it Evangelical or Catholic, we love to involve God in our petty squabbles, our political maneuverings, and our personal crusades. But the reality we must all remember is that God is not on our side, nor against our enemies. He is for or against whomever He chooses to be for or against, and it is our task to stand with Him on His side.

The quest to discover who God stands against and with is a lifelong quest, not one we can end anytime soon. And the consequences of ignoring that quest, or worse yet invoking God in our own personal, social, or political wars, are dire indeed.

May we all search long and hard to be sure we are on God’s side, and stand with Him rather than invoking Him to stand with us.